

Day-21 Ethics case study

Q.1) You are an honest and responsible civil servant. You often observe the following:

1. There is a general perception that adhering to ethical conduct one may face difficulties to oneself and cause problems for the family, whereas unfair practices may help to reach the career goals.
2. When the number of people adopting unfair means is large, a small minority having a penchant towards ethical means makes no difference.
3. Sticking to ethical means is detrimental to the larger developmental goals
4. While one may not involve oneself in large unethical practices but giving and accepting small gifts makes the system more efficient.

Examine the above statements with their merits and demerits. (250 Words, 20)

Q.2) Saraswati was a successful IT professional in USA. Moved by the patriotic sense of doing something for the country she returned to India. Together with some other like-minded friends, she formed an NGO to build a school for a poor rural community.

The objective of the school was to provide the best quality modern education at a nominal cost. She soon discovered that she has to seek permission from a number of Governments agencies. The rules and procedures were quite confusing and cumbersome. What frustrated her most was the delays, callous attitude of officials and constant demand of bribes. Her experience and the experience of many others like her has deterred people from taking up social service projects.

A measure of Government control over voluntary social work is necessary. But it should not be exercised in a coercive or corrupt manner. What measures can you suggest to ensure that due control is exercised but well meaning, honest NGO efforts are not thwarted? (25 marks)

Q.3) Edward Snowden, a computer expert and former CIA administrator, released confidential Government documents to the press about the existence of Government surveillance programmes. According to many legal experts and the US Government, his action violated the Espionage act of 1971, which identified the leak of State secret as an act of treason. Yet, despite the fact that he broke the law, Snowden argued that he had a moral obligation to act. He gave a justification for his “whistle blowing” by stating that he had a duty “to inform the public as to that which is done in their name and that which is done against them.” According to Snowden, the Government’s violation of privacy had to be exposed regardless of legality since more substantive issues of social action and public morality were

involved here. Many agreed with Snowden. Few argued that he broke the law and compromised national security, for which he should be held accountable.

Do you agree that Snowden's actions were ethically justified even if legally prohibited? Why or why not?

Make an argument by weighing the competing values in this case (250 words, 20 marks)

Q.4) You are a Public Information Officer (PIO) in a government department. You are aware that the RTI Act 2005 envisages transparency and accountability in administration. The act has functioned as a check on the supposedly arbitrarily administrative behaviour and actions. However, as a PIO you have observed that

there are citizens who filed RTI applications not for themselves but on behalf of such stakeholders who purportedly want to have access to information to further their own interests. At the same time there are

these RTI activists who routinely file RTI applications and attempt to extort money from the decision makers.

This type of RTI activism has affected the functioning of the administration adversely and also possibly jeopardises the genuineness of the applications which are essentially aimed at getting justice. What measures would you suggest separating genuine and non-genuine applications? Give merits and demerits of your suggestions. (250 Words, 20)